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ABSTRACT

This handbook was designed to offer a low-cost, local, and practical approach to working with re-entry women college students. It is intended for use by staff in small colleges (under 1,000 students) where women's centers and on-campus child care are rare and where the needs of re-entry students have not been adequately addressed. The information presented is based on the experience of the Project for Re-Entry Students implemented at Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska. Citing the strategies used at Midland as examples, this guide outlines a method by which small colleges can design programs for re-entry students suited to their individual needs. The numbers and needs of re-entry women students are presented along with suggestions for meeting those needs. Ways of obtaining information about a college's re-entry student population and its specific needs are discussed, and ways to use this local information are considered. Specific suggestions for action are provided in the areas of recruitment and orientation, student services, faculty services, and administrative services. The handbook concludes with a brief discussion of program evaluation; a list of references; and appendices which contain a student survey form, a summary of the needs assessment survey, and a brochure for re-entry students. (NRB)

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Welcoming Re-Entry Women Students to the Small College

Midland Lutheran College
Fremont, Nebraska

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Women's Educational Equity Act Program
U.S. Department of Education

THE REWARDING CHALLENGE:
WELCOMING RE-ENTRY WOMEN STUDENTS TO THE SMALL COLLEGE

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Elizabeth Y. Mulliken

ABOUT THE LOGO

The Project for Re-Entry Students logo gives shape to two meanings of a woman's educational experience. On the one hand, it suggests the woman's centering on herself and her development, and on the other it evokes her reaching outward through this development toward greater service and achievement.

THE REWARDING CHALLENGE: AN INTRODUCTION

My experience has been rewarding, a challenge and refreshing. I find all my classes a wonderful experience.

The comment above from a re-entry student suggested the title for this handbook. The student describes the rewards she has experienced since she accepted the challenge of returning to college after some years spent as a busy job holder, homemaker, and parent. Her words convey some of the excitement that women often feel upon resuming their formal education--an excitement frequently shared by college staff who work with these capable, highly motivated students.

THE CHALLENGE TO COLLEGE STAFF

College staff share in the challenges and the rewards of working with re-entry women students. The challenge for staff is to find ways to adjust the student services and administrative procedures of a small college, generally designed for 18- to 22-year-olds living in dormitories, to meet the needs of a different student clientele. For example, re-entry women students may not need sororities or dormitories or dances with rock bands, but they may need child care information or more flexible registration schedules, or the chance to meet other students of similar age and circumstances. Although small colleges may need the added enrollment that this group of students provides, that need often comes at a time when financial resources are strained and personnel already overburdened. The challenge for staff members of small colleges then becomes to find the most efficient ways to use available resources to serve this group of students. Our handbook is designed to help small colleges meet this rewarding challenge.

A HANDBOOK FOR SMALL COLLEGE STAFF

The Rewarding Challenge is designed for use by staff in colleges: (1) with an enrollment of less than one thousand, (2) where women's centers and on-campus child care are rare, and (3) where the re-entry student population has not been analyzed or has been considered as deserving of the same services as those given to traditional students. It is designed for staff members

who are busy with multiple responsibilities, who may combine administrative work with classroom teaching, and/or who do not have the time available to read extensively in educational literature or to devise elaborate programs and evaluative procedures. This handbook takes a low-cost, local, and practical approach to working with re-entry women students, and it is brief.

THE MIDLAND PROJECT

This handbook is based on the experience of the Project for Re-Entry Students, a Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA)-funded program carried out during the 1980-81 academic year at Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska. Midland is a coeducational liberal arts institution with a day school enrollment of about 800 students. The percentage of re-entry students at Midland and the needs they revealed correspond closely to national trends as shown in educational literature, so in a sense, Midland's experiences are universal. Yet each small college has its own personality, and this uniqueness is one of the strengths of smaller institutions. Thus, the particular strategies used at Midland are presented as examples rather than models, and they are supplemented with suggestions gleaned from other small colleges. The Rewarding Challenge outlines a method by which a small college can design an individual program for re-entry students suited to its own situation and needs.

HANDBOOK ORGANIZATION

The handbook begins with a rationale that presents the numbers and needs of re-entry women students and suggests a local, low-cost approach to meeting those needs. The second section, "Needs Assessment," discusses ways of obtaining information about a campus's re-entry student population and its needs. "Principles of Program Design" tackles the question of how to put this local information to use. The next four sections provide some specific suggestions for action. The book concludes with a brief discussion of program evaluation, a list of references, and appendices.

CONCERN FOR WOMEN AND MEN

As its title indicates, this handbook is intended primarily to identify strategies for dealing with re-entry women students. On the Midland campus, as on most of the nation's campuses, women are a substantial majority of the re-entry student population. For a number of reasons discussed in "Rationale," they are a population of greater need than men at the present time. However, for the minority of men who face life situations similar to women's as they re-enter college, the suggestions offered here can be very helpful. For example, some male students at Midland are single parents or are dealing with the pressures of entering nontraditional careers for men, such as nursing. The Midland Project

for Re-Entry Students included both women and men. Although this handbook concentrates on the needs of re-entry women, adapting campus policies to re-entry women's needs is likely to benefit re-entry men, as well as an institution's faculty and staff.

RATIONALE

Re-entry women form an increasing proportion of college enrollments. While the proportionate numbers of 18- to 22-year-olds will decrease in the near future, the number of women entering college after an interval of child rearing or outside employment is increasing. The Carnegie Council predicts that by the year 2000, half of all college students will be over the age of 22, and more than half of these students will be women (Weinstein 1980). Already, half of all college students are women, and the numbers of 24- to 34-year-old women returning to school increased 187 percent between 1975 and 1978 (Weinstein 1980).

AN INCREASING STUDENT POPULATION

Why are so many women returning to college? Some return because they enjoy the intellectual stimulation of college work. Others are finding an opportunity later in life to continue the education they were not able to complete earlier. But the most common reason for returning to school is economic.

Today, the majority of women enter the work force. Most will be a part of it before and after child rearing, and many will work while raising children as well. Economic pressures bear the hardest on the increasing number of women who provide the primary support for their families. However, any woman, whether single, married, or divorced, may find that she needs a college education. Wage discrimination and traditional occupational segregation by sex make it extremely difficult for a noncollege-educated woman to find an economically satisfactory job. Non-college-educated minority women have an even more difficult time.

Until very recently, proportionally more men than women attended college. This means that more women than men who might have gone to college in the forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies are potential students now as they realize their need for a college degree.

Another type of re-entry student is the already-employed woman who wants to add to her credentials so that she can advance in her job. Nurses, for example, may wish to obtain a B.A. degree. At Midland, the nursing faculty conducted a survey of the six counties surrounding the college and discovered over 400 potential students interested in a program designed for licensed

practical nurses wanting to earn the registered nurse license, including a B.A. degree.

In short, there are many potential re-entry women students to be found. At Midland, 11 percent of the daytime enrollment are re-entry students, a figure quite close to the national average. Of this 11 percent, two-thirds are women and one third is men. A gradual increase in the proportion of re-entry students enrolled has taken place, catching the college somewhat unprepared.

ADVANTAGES OF THE SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGE

Why should these students choose to go to a relatively expensive small private college when nearby community colleges and state-supported universities are available? A survey of Midland's re-entry students revealed two factors that give the small college a competitive edge in attracting re-entry women students. One is location; the other is size.

Location

Re-entry women look first at the educational opportunities closest to home. Although in theory every college in the country may compete for an eligible high school senior, a re-entry woman student often is anchored in a specific location. She lives where her job is or where her husband's job is, where the children go to school, where she is a part of the community. She needs to mesh her education with the load of responsibilities she is already carrying. One good way to make this possible is to study close to home. Then she need not strain the family resources by spending a lot of time and money commuting, and there is less risk that she will be away if there is a family crisis. Many Midland students listed location as a factor in their choice of college. As one student put it, "I married into the area and wanted to continue my education, so I looked into MLC."

Size

Large educational institutions can be very intimidating to the re-entry student. They can be intimidating to anyone, of course, but to the rural or small community woman who is not sure she dare go to college at all, the complexity and impersonality of larger institutions can be especially daunting. Larger institutions frequently deal with this problem by providing women's centers to offer the support and friendliness that such women need. On the smaller campus, parking, getting enrolled, finding classes, and dealing with other people and procedures are easier and less intimidating. When the local college is a community resource, as it often is, the new re-entry student may have been on campus for various events before enrolling, so may know the site and some of the staff and students. When classes are small, classmates become acquainted rapidly. Our survey showed that at Midland the smallness and

friendliness of the campus were highly positive factors for re-entry students. They valued the individual attention received from instructors and the friendliness of staff and students. These are assets for attracting re-entry students to small colleges.

BARRIERS TO COLLEGE RE-ENTRY

The importance of providing a welcoming, supportive environment for re-entry students cannot be overemphasized. The fact that an educational environment is physically close at hand is no guarantee that a re-entry woman will feel that she can take advantage of it. Midland re-entry students have said, "I was scared the first week of classes" or "I had to think about it for eight months before I called up the admissions office." This apprehensiveness is a widely documented phenomenon among re-entry students. As Monnie Ryan writes in "Whatcha Gonna Be When You Grow Up?" A Guide for Older Women Who Want to Go to College, most re-entry women "have one thing in common: they're shaking in their shoes" (Ryan 1978, p. 4).

What causes women to be anxious or hesitant about entering college, even when they feel the need for further education? The staff of Roots and Wings, a WEEA-funded project in Nebraska, interviewed more than 300 rural women about their needs for higher education. They found a number of specific sex-role patterns among these women that formed barriers to their seeking higher education (Walsh et al. 1980). As described by Sheila Collins, these are:

1. "She'll Never Run Out of Relatives, or Me Last." Women are still taught and expected to place the needs and careers of others above their own. They are regarded (and regard themselves) primarily as care givers, rather than as people whose potential growth and development are as important as the growth and development of other family members. Associated with these feelings is women's sense that somehow the "family money cannot properly be spent on Mommy's education."

2. "Reserve Makes Us Strangers." This is the adult version of "Don't talk to strangers." Training women to listen but not talk, or to engage only in conventional small talk, results in keeping each person alone. A nonassertive good listener may be shy about discussing college plans with family and friends and hesitant to seek information about a college. Once on campus, such a potential student might decide to go home rather than ask for help in dealing with incomprehensible registration forms, or she may hesitate to explain a difficulty to an unreceptive professor.

3. "Twosies, or Don't Go by Yourself." Many nonurban women are programmed to require a companion for activities that are not routine. The prevalence of this pattern indicates the extent of women's training to be diffident and self-conscious. In the college setting, this translates into the re-entry woman's need to know that she will not be the only older student in the class. On the positive side, the existence of a contemporary role model may encourage another re-entry student to enroll. This might be called "If She Can Do It, I Can Do It."

4. "Don't Worry Your Pretty Little Head." The assumption that women are meant primarily to be decorative and dependent often conceals the fact that they are denied access to critical information of an economic or political nature. This denial effectively prevents the development of decision-making or leadership skills in one's "pretty little head." This assumption can affect faculty advisors as they plan programs for re-entry students. Also, to the degree that a woman has internalized the cultural image of herself as decorative and dependent, she tends to avoid taking course work in challenging or nontraditional fields and to underestimate her scholarly abilities (Lacher 1978). Re-entry women students sometimes show test anxiety and worry about their academic performance because of false assumptions about presumed female incompetence.

5. "The Facts of Life." The facts of female life in rural communities are not so much sexual as sexist. Women learn that their lives (education, careers) are more interruptible than men's; that after their families are established they should not expect to be as mobile as men, as able to move to another location where greater opportunity exists; that they must comply with all college regulations, even those obviously inappropriate for them (such as taking physical education at age 60)--in short, that they must not deviate from customary patterns of female behavior. Because re-entry women students have often had their education interrupted, they may have problems with transfer of credits and fulfilling graduation or residency requirements. Because they have learned to comply, they may never realize that regulations are negotiable. The unspoken requirement not to deviate from the usual may mean that, as one student in the Roots and Wings project reported, "It is not customary here for a grown woman to go to the college. When I went back to school it was almost a scandal. People thought I was shopping for a man so I could step out on my husband" (Walsh et al. 1980, p. 21).

REWARDS OF REMOVING BARRIERS

The prevalence of these barriers both of attitude and circumstance means that a college must (a) take active steps to show potential students that it is appropriate for them to re-enter college and (b) provide the support these students need to develop the self-confidence they must have to complete their educational programs successfully amd to enter the work place. If the college succeeds, the rewards are great. The college gains needed enrollments of highly motivated students who present few disciplinary problems.

Despite their fears of academic incompetence, re-entry women students perform extremely well. Without exception, Midland faculty and administrators ranked the academic performance of re-entry students (both men and women) as at least equal to, and in most instances better than, that of traditional students. Re-entry students also tend to enhance college-community relations, because they are local people who maintain their campus ties after graduation. And the college staff feels the satisfaction of having helped a deserving group of students gain knowledge, career skills, and a sense of accomplishment.

A LOCAL APPROACH

Where should a college staff begin? Specifically, what active steps should be taken to recruit re-entry women students and make them comfortable on campus? There is, as the next section of this handbook suggests, a growing body of literature concerning the needs of re-entry women students and how to meet them. Colleges venturing into this area are not breaking new ground. The task is not so much one of developing innovative programming as it is of finding out which of the many successful options available are best suited to a particular small college campus. The Midland project experience suggests a local approach in which the small college staff combines a knowledge of other successful programs with a process of self-examination, using currently enrolled re-entry students as a source of information about how well or ill this student population is being served. At the heart of this approach is the assumption that successful policy changes in a small college depend on attentiveness to the individuality of the institution involved--its personnel, priorities, decision-making style, relationship with its constituents, and community profile.

A LOW-COST APPROACH

A second assumption on which this model is based is that it simply is not practical for a small college to institute changes that require a large financial outlay. Ideally, colleges might construct women's centers and day care centers, provide full-time personal and career counselors, and so on. Some colleges do all these things. This handbook is for the college that wishes to attract re-entry

students but cannot afford to add facilities and staff. The Midland Project for Re-Entry Students suggests that such a college can build a response to re-entry students into its present system.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There are at least two ways to determine re-entry students' needs. One is to read the literature on re-entry; the other is to get the opinions of re-entry students. A combination of both methods can be fruitful.

THE LITERATURE OF RE-ENTRY WOMEN STUDENTS

Because re-entry women students recently have been singled out as a population of interest to postsecondary educators, considerable effort has been expended on identifying their educational needs and on designing programs to meet those needs. A few hours of browsing in Resources in Education, Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), Education Index, and other educational sources on library reference shelves will yield a wealth of material. For those who prefer a concise overview with a selected bibliography, a good place to start is with the materials from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, a program of the Association of American Colleges. They include the following publications:*

- Recruitment and Admissions: Opening the Door for Re-Entry Women
- Obtaining a Degree: Alternative Options for Re-Entry Women
- The Counseling Needs of Re-Entry Women
- Campus Child Care: A Challenge for the 80's
- Financial Aid: Helping Re-Entry Women Pay College Costs
- Barriers to Re-Entry Women: College Transfer Policies, Residency, and Graduation Requirements

These materials, designed for postsecondary institutions of all sizes, summarize research on the needs of re-entry women and list many possible ways for colleges to meet those needs. They do not provide detailed information about particular programs.

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*Available from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.

One way to use these materials might be to have the staff members working in a particular area covered in the literature discuss what has been written about that area and consider which of the options offered for action would be feasible for their own campus. However, the experience of those connected with the Midland project suggests that before staff members of a small college are ready to act on meeting the needs of re-entry women, they must be made aware that (a) re-entry women are or are going to be a significant population on campus and (b) their needs are different from those of other students. Both of these points are liable to be questioned in the absence of specific local evidence to the contrary. Therefore, appropriate next steps after reading the materials listed above and any others of interest are to determine the re-entry student population on campus and to design a local plan for surveying its needs.

CAMPUS CENSUS

Most campuses already have re-entry students. However, because many of these students do not look noticeably older than other students, and because a college may not be keeping track of this group as a separate population, they may be rather invisible to faculty and staff. At Midland, it seemed that nobody really knew how many re-entry students were enrolled. Various campus administrative offices estimated that there were perhaps two dozen. The only way to find out exactly how many was to comb the individual registration records for the dates of birth of the students. (Obviously, campuses with computer data bases that can print out a list of students categorized by date of birth will be spared this tedious step.) Taking birth years prior to 1956 as a definition of a re-entry student, project staff found 67 students aged 25 and over enrolled in the day school in the fall semester of 1980--44 women and 23 men.

THE QUESTION OF DEFINITION

As the list of re-entry students grew, some students not yet 25 years of age were discovered who had to be defined as "re-entry students by experience." For example, some students as young as 19 were single parents. They were in great need of the kinds of support services re-entry women require, such as child care and a support group to help them in their struggle with parenting, housekeeping, working outside the home, and studying. These students were also the hardest to identify, since nothing in college records indicated which students were parents. The records of marital status did not help as screening guides, since many married students were not parents, some single students were, and of the divorced students, some were parents and some were not. At this point in the search, the personal knowledge of staff and students had to be relied on, and it is safe to say that because of the use of such an unsystematic method, it can never be known for certain if all of those sought were found.

However, the provisional count indicated that over 11 percent of the total day school population in the fall semester of 1980 consisted of "nontraditional" students, as the college prefers to call them. In numbers, this was 93 nontraditional or re-entry students out of a day school enrollment of 817. Of the 93, 60 were women and 33 were men. The female to male ratio of two-thirds women to one-third men coincided with the national trend (Fisher-Thompson 1980). This similarity to national trends also held when the figures were subdivided into full-time and part-time students. Of these nontraditional students, 61 were full-time and 32 were part-time; two-thirds of both groups were women. All of these numbers were higher than college staff had expected.

An additional population of re-entry women was enrolled in the evening school, the more usual place one expects to find older students. The enrollment of 49 in courses offered for college credit included 37 re-entry women and 9 re-entry men during the fall semester of 1980. More were taking noncredit courses, but no age data were available for these students.

SUBGROUPS As the list of re-entry students grew, and as project staff began working with them, several subpopulations within the group became apparent. These subgroups included:

1. Young single parents, usually female, often on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), with great need of support services

2. Career preparers in their late twenties or thirties, of both sexes, usually relatively independent, with less need of support services

3. Women returning to college after some time spent as homemakers, often uncertain about skills and identity, needing support services

4. Men returning to college after spending time in the military, some needing support services and others fitting into category 2

There may be other groups. The Midland campus draws its nonresident enrollment from a primarily rural, white population living in eastern Nebraska. Other campuses may discover different ethnic subpopulations, socioeconomic groups, and age groups. It is important in assessing needs to reach the various subpopulations within the re-entry student group on campus.

INTERVIEWS Once re-entry students have been identified, they become a valuable source of information about what populations the college is reaching, how it is attracting them,

and what improvements are needed. These students are generally articulate, helpful, and delighted to have their opinions solicited. The Project for Re-Entry Students staff found personal interviews with these women students highly useful in identifying areas of concern on the Midland campus. When asked such open-ended questions as "What's it like coming back to school here?" "What has been good about returning to school?" and "What has been difficult for you in returning to school?" the students gave detailed responses.

The answers to these simple questions can be a revelation. Although nearly all re-entry students had difficulty finding the time, money, and self-confidence to come back to school, some on the Midland campus had problems that could be solved easily. For example, one student attended classes for the better part of a semester without knowing there was a snack bar where she could get lunch or a cup of coffee between classes. This suggested the need for a special information brochure for re-entry students. Other students identified policies of individual faculty members that were insensitive to their life situations. To illustrate, there was a faculty member who did not recognize that the young-looking student who resisted going on a required overnight field trip had a legitimate concern about finding a baby-sitter for her two-year-old twins. This indicated a definite need for ways to increase faculty awareness of the life situations of re-entry students when faculty members design course requirements. Perhaps an alternative assignment could have been given.

SURVEYS (QUESTIONNAIRES)

After one studies the results of several interviews, a perspective emerges on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular college with regard to re-entry students. This information can be used as the basis for designing a needs assessment method, possibly a local questionnaire, that will reach greater numbers of students. For those whose hearts fall at the thought of designing a questionnaire, or for those who simply do not have the time to design an instrument, there are some already available for general use. One from Women's Educational Equity Act materials is June O. Carter's "Student Needs Questionnaire," found on pages 9-14 of Second Wind: A Program for Returning Women Students.* Carter's questionnaire shows what re-entry students need, though it does not provide an evaluation of what a particular college is already doing.

To gain specific local information, a specially designed questionnaire has obvious advantages. The Midland project staff were not experts in questionnaire design. However, by using

*This book may be ordered from the WEEA Publishing Center, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160.

other questionnaires as models, the information obtained from re-entry student interviews, and the thoughtful commentary of the project evaluator, a local instrument was designed. The questions were grouped in a way roughly paralleling the organizational design of the college, so that there were questions concerning recruitment and orientation, student services, faculty services, and administrative services. Re-entry students were also asked which presently available services they used. Some open-ended questions were added to elicit comments about the good parts and the bad parts of the students' college experiences.

A pilot test revealed a few design flaws in this simple instrument, but also showed that it could produce some interesting information. The corrected questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix A. Question 3 on the final version was unnecessary because it duplicated information produced by the 1-to-4 ratings on question 2; all of the other questions were useful.

Administering the Questionnaire

Once the instrument is in hand, the next question is how to administer it. The Midland project distributed the questionnaires to students via faculty members. For each re-entry student on the list, a particular course in which he or she was enrolled was identified. Professors received a list of the re-entry students in their course(s) who were to complete the questionnaire outside of class and then return it. The professors then sent the (anonymous) completed forms to the project director via campus mail. This procedure required a good deal of research on the part of project staff, but it had some advantages. Staff members met individually with faculty members who were to distribute the surveys; this had the effect of creating interest in the project and involving nearly half of the faculty in the information-gathering process. Also, some faculty members identified additional re-entry students, an unexpected bonus. Furthermore, having faculty distribute the questionnaires seems to have been a good motivator for students to return them. Fifty percent were returned by the deadline.

A less time-consuming method of distribution would be to mail the questionnaires or, if individual student mailboxes were available, to circulate them through campus mail. However, these methods might not result in as high a return rate.

Analysis of Data

When the questionnaires came back, the results were hand tabulated. Obviously, computer methods would be superior if proper expertise and equipment were available. Hand methods are possible, however, and by a simple calculation of the gross mean for each item in the ratings-of-needs questions (numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5), a priority list of

re-entry student needs on the Midland campus was established. The project staff summarized the results of the needs assessment in a narrative, which was distributed to all faculty and staff. This narrative summary comprises Appendix B.

SURVEYING POTENTIAL STUDENTS

A college's current re-entry student population is one source of information about that group's needs, but it is not the only one. Another very interesting group consists of potential students who have not entered college but who might, given sufficient inducement. One of the weaknesses in re-entry student research is that frequently it has been restricted to students already enrolled. Part of the reason for this omission, as the Midland project staff discovered, may be the difficulties involved in surveying the general public.

The first difficulty is in identifying the potential re-entry students in a community. A large-scale random survey would be costly, so a smaller sample must be found. At Midland, available lists of noncollege graduates included those who had taken the General Education Development exams at the college and alumni files of students who had attended Midland but left without obtaining a degree. Neither of these lists was current. Various current lists of names and addresses for special events mailings included many who had already graduated from college.

Lacking the time to do demographic detective work on these or other lists, the project staff turned to a less systematic, more low-cost way of reaching the public, which was to work through local organizations. To reach rural women, the project director gave questionnaires to 55 Extension Club leaders at their quarterly meeting. To reach the college's church constituency, helpful alumnae gave questionnaires to two Lutheran church women's groups. To reach economically disadvantaged women, an alumna employed at the local social service agency gave questionnaires to those clients interested in higher education. Had time and staff permitted, more groups could have been reached, including perhaps some men's groups, to see if re-entry educational needs would differ by sex.

A second difficulty in surveying the public is in designing a suitable instrument. The Midland re-entry student questionnaire was not a suitable instrument for this purpose, since its questions presupposed knowledge of the college. To survey area women, project staff turned to a commercially available instrument, the Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey (ALNAS), which was being pilot-tested by American College Testing (ACT) at the time of our study. ALNAS is "an untimed questionnaire designed to evaluate the education-related needs of adult learners" (ALNAS 1980, p. 1).*

*For information about ALNAS, write to the American College Testing Program, Institutional Services Area, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243.

It has the advantages of being readily available and of having the data processing supplied by ACT for a reasonable fee.

In conducting a community survey, project staff hoped not only to get a sense of community women's educational needs, but also to find out why some women return to college, while others who may have similar educational needs do not. A copy of ALNAS was given to each re-entry student at Midland along with the Midland questionnaire. The plan was to compare the ALNAS responses of enrolled women with those of women not enrolled. Unfortunately, although 70 number-coded ALNAS forms from Midland's re-entry students were sent to ACT along with 100 from community women, only 45 students correctly marked the question in the ACT data printout that identified them as "currently enrolled." Thus, no accurate comparison of the responses of the two groups could be made.

However, ALNAS did produce some interesting information. A list of course subject preferences seemed helpful for continuing education curriculum planning. And most interesting to the project staff was that although few of the community women indicated that they planned to continue their education, almost all of them identified many personal educational needs. These data support the findings of the Roots and Wings project cited earlier--that barriers of attitude and circumstance prevent women from continuing their education, rather than lack of need for that education.

Once the local information from community members and/or re-entry students has been gathered, tabulated, and analyzed, the next question is how to translate these data into an appropriately designed program.

PRINCIPLES OF PROGRAM DESIGN

In deciding how to use the information gathered about re-entry student needs, there are two principles that will help to create a successful program. They are:

1. Identify the institution's strengths and build on them.

2. Use methods of programming compatible with the institution's working style.

To illustrate how these principles work in practice, Midland Lutheran College is used as an example. The reader may draw whatever distinctions are necessary between his or her institutional profile and that of Midland.

PROFILE OF MIDLAND LUTHERAN COLLEGE

Midland Lutheran College is a private, church-related, liberal arts institution located in Fremont, Nebraska, a town of 25,000 and the county seat of Dodge County. Dodge and the surrounding counties are largely agricultural, and the population density outside of Fremont is close to the state average of 20 persons per square mile. Fremont is in eastern Nebraska, about 35 miles from Omaha and 60 miles from Lincoln, the state capital, so it combines a rural setting with access to the urban centers of the state.

The student body reflects this rural-urban setting. It consists of many farm and small-town people from Nebraska and Iowa, and some students from Omaha; Chicago; Denver; Washington, D.C.; and other urban communities. There are also some foreign students, the most numerous group being Nigerians. Nearly all the minority students come from urban communities. This means that the re-entry student population, which is drawn from the local area, consists almost entirely of white, rural, and small-town residents. The majority of the traditional students live in dormitories on campus and are in the conventional 18 to 22 years of age bracket. The college provides no housing for married students.

The most popular majors among Midland students are business, nursing, and education. Although some students go on to postgraduate education, most enter the job market upon graduation, becoming nurses, teachers, medical technicians, clerical workers, or business people. Placement offices for students are maintained by

the business, nursing, and education departments; there is no all-college career planning center.

The college offers the usual activities of small liberal arts institutions. There are strong music and art programs. Dramatics and journalism provide both curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students. There are intercollegiate athletics and forensics competitions. Campus organizations include honor societies, religious life organizations, student government, and social organizations that include local fraternities and sororities.

IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS

The particular strengths Midland re-entry students identified for the campus are its friendliness and smallness and the concern of the staff for the individual student.

"Classes are small enough to get information. Most professors seem genuinely interested in students" was a typical comment. Another was, "It's been a very personal learning experience, contrary to the number feeling at large universities previously attended."

Many liked the rapport with other students on campus. "I also enjoy knowing the other students, both young and not so young," said one. These benefits have encouraged re-entry students to enroll, in spite of the difficulties they have in returning to school, which they identify as finding the money, the time, and the courage to go.

These college strengths mean that an effective mode of working with students on the Midland campus is through individual contact with other students and through reaching the staff members who work individually with students.

COMPATIBLE PROGRAMMING METHODS

Midland College is strong in providing personal attention to students, and apparently is satisfied with its current focus and approach. Educational changes are viewed with a certain amount of caution, because the college sees its mission as continuing to do in the future what it has done well in the past. As on many campuses, proposals involving institutional change may be greeted with responses such as "We're not ready for that," "We're doing all right without it," and, of course, "It costs too much."

None of this means that re-entry students' needs cannot be met. However, an individual campus's receptivity to and felt need for change have considerable bearing on what may be done, and particularly on the means by which things are accomplished. An institution with an administration and faculty who welcome change and innovation may already have forums available through which ideas concerning a new student population can be aired and new institutional policies established. An example of such an institution

is Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where three faculty institutes are held each year and where educational innovation is actively encouraged. Alverno has tested many effective programs for re-entry women students, and readers whose campuses foster change might want to profit from Alverno's experience.*

Slower patterns of change may be more common in small private colleges, however, and for such campuses, the following considerations about programming possibilities are relevant:

1. The more support an objective has from an institution's administrative policymakers, the more progress can be made toward meeting that objective. A college president, academic dean, director of student personnel, or the like can establish the right climate for meeting the needs of re-entry students by persuading a few colleagues to work with him or her. A faculty member or an assistant or associate administrator attempting to effect the same change is well advised to cultivate as much support as possible from top administrators.

2. Patterns of support will determine which objectives can be met easily and which cannot. Because Midland Lutheran College has strength in individualized treatment of students, the Midland project had its greatest impact at the personal level, in matters of advising, counseling, and organizing students. On the other hand, it had less impact in areas requiring general institutional policy changes, such as developing methods of allowing credit for life experience, opening a lounge for re-entry students, or changing course offerings.

PERSPECTIVE The philosophy of the project staff is to have a practical view of what is possible, not to form unrealistic expectations, and to concentrate effort in the most productive areas. To decide what approach to take in meeting re-entry students' needs in a particular college, it may be profitable to consider the following questions:

- Who sets policy?
- Who will organize and coordinate this effort?
- How much support will the organizer(s) have, and from whom?
- What are our institutional strengths in general? With regard to re-entry students (as the questionnaire shows)?

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*For information, write to Alverno College, 3401 South 39th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53215.

- What is our institutional working style (e.g., hierarchical or democratic, via committees or individuals, through informal networks or formal structures)?

Frequently, in the small college setting informal methods of accomplishing business are effective. As it happened, Midland College was undergoing the extensive self-examination required by the accreditation process during the project year. This involved many committee meetings. As a consequence, some usually available meeting times were eliminated from project use, and the suggestion of additional meetings as a means of accomplishing project objectives was not greeted with smiles. People were "committeed out." Adjusting to this reality, the project staff reduced the use of committee meetings and worked more on a simple, direct basis with the students and staffs involved. This direct personal approach, though dictated by circumstances, resulted in a positive response to the project, as the evaluation process showed.

INDIVIDUAL ALLIES

An advantage of the small private college is that it is possible to know individual staff members, to learn to appreciate individual strengths, and to work with individual interests. As the Midland project progressed, it gathered allies on the staff. There were department heads who noted the increasing enrollment of re-entry women in their fields, faculty members concerned about finding help for particular students, and administrators who cared about re-entry students' needs. These very important people helped create the climate of acceptance needed for this particular project to succeed. Of even more concern, they will continue to work with and for re-entry students when the project is over. Few educational enterprises can expect to have the complete support of all the staff, but it is not necessary to persuade everyone. Work can begin with a nucleus of concerned individuals whose influence will gradually involve others.

CONCERN FOR WOMEN

A final consideration of program design involves developing a program concerned with women, a matter that can be an issue in a coeducational institution. Because the project that produced this handbook was funded by the Women's Educational Equity Act Program, because women are the majority of re-entry students, and most of all because women are a population of great educational and economic need, this handbook focuses on the needs of re-entry women. However, the program suggestions given here will also benefit male students in similar life situations. In naming and conducting the Midland project, all re-entry students were included. This was done for reasons of equity, of course, but also because even among highly educated academicians, misogyny is not completely unknown. A program can sometimes gain more acceptance for educational equity for women when its innocuous label grants it a hearing.

RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION

Most small college admissions staffs are dedicated to the pursuit of eligible high school seniors. This means that re-entry students who seek out the college may do so of their own volition, or in response to less conventional methods of recruitment. Of fifty-eight Midland re-entry students who answered the question "How did you learn about Midland College and its programs?" three mentioned the admissions staff and five learned from the local newspaper. By contrast, eight had attended the college before; ten learned from friends, relatives, alumni(ae), or associates at work; and twenty-four--by far the largest number--explained that they knew about the college because they lived in the area.

LOCALITY AS A RECRUITING TOOL

These results, although scarcely definitive, do suggest some interesting interpretations. For one, they support the suggestion, mentioned earlier in this handbook, that the physical proximity of a college in and of itself creates interest. Personal interviews with Midland students strongly reinforced this interpretation. Whatever the college does that is reported in the newspaper, on radio or television, or involves the community in on-campus events has a recruitment potential for re-entry students.

ESTABLISHING APPROPRIATENESS

However, the fact that a college is visible does not mean that it is seen as appropriate and worth seeking out by an adult student. Nor does it mean that community members are familiar with what the college has to offer them. The survey of Midland re-entry students showed a high interest in having community programs for area adults to inform them of college events and offerings. The need for such community programs was reinforced by the results of the Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey given to area women. For example, of the fifty-five Extension Club leaders who completed the survey, only four held college degrees. Virtually all of the fifty-five indicated the need for further education, but only five planned to continue their education. The others apparently did not feel that college would be an appropriate way for them to fulfill their educational needs.

The project staff made a small test of the impact of a community program on such a group by returning to the Extension Club leaders' group to share the results of the survey with them. As a part of the program, the instructor of a noncredit evening course, Effectiveness Training for Women, presented an introduction to her course. One of the club leaders attending the meeting happened to be a full-time re-entry student at Midland, so she served as a role model for the others. Immediately after this session, one member of the audience went to the campus and registered for the effectiveness training course. Appropriateness apparently was established for at least one woman. Perhaps a regular series of programs of this type would result in increased enrollments.

Colleges with strong adult education programs--evening schools, community service courses, continuing education workshops, Elderhostel programs, and the like--are already well situated to attract adult, full-time day students. Workshops and other noncredit programs help students gain confidence and familiarize themselves with the college and its programs. Colleges that only recently have identified re-entry students as a population they wish to serve will need to find ways, adapted to their own communities, of showing that they welcome adult students.

BROCHURES One way of welcoming re-entry students is to develop a brochure containing information appropriate to their needs. The Midland project's re-entry student questionnaire results strongly endorsed this idea. Re-entry students met with the admissions staff to help design a brochure and to discuss what its contents should be. As the students recalled, their questions before entering college concerned the appropriateness of returning to college as an older student (Will I be the only one?), the mechanics of returning (How can I afford it? What about transfer credits?), and the practical questions of routine on campus (Where do I park? Eat?). These are questions not answered by the college's regular collection of publications. The brochure was designed to complement other college publications that provide information on credits, course requirements, majors, etc. This brochure, published at college expense, comprises Appendix C.

Although a re-entry students' brochure is helpful, it is only one step in preparing publications to make these students feel comfortable on campus. Further actions are necessary. The project staff recommends that as a college's various publications are reviewed and revised, information about re-entry students be included in all of them. College publications may be made representative both of the student body the institution already has and of the one it wishes to attract. Role models are important.

PERSONAL ROLE MODELS

Because it is important to see role models in the flesh, as well as in publications, a college with the opportunity to do so might consider hiring an admissions counselor who was herself a re-entry student. This could occur when a turnover in the admissions staff creates an opening. A number of Midland re-entry students have said they decided to try college when they saw that someone they could identify with had done so successfully. In a small-town, rural community such as this, personal contact and example are often the most successful methods for gathering people to participate in any activity, particularly a nonroutine activity.

ADMISSIONS STANDARDS

Once the potential student has been brought to the campus, it is important to enhance her sense of self-esteem and competence. Entrance procedures and requirements may have quite an effect on her feelings, for good or for ill. Thus, some students may fear the admissions requirement of taking an American College Testing (ACT) exam. One Midland student, now doing quite well, said she was sure she had "flunked" the ACT exam. Another potential student told a project staffer that she would not enroll at the college if entrance tests were required. Many colleges have stopped requiring ACT or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores from adult students (Mendelsohn 1981).

Undue emphasis on high school records can also have a chilling effect on a potential student's enthusiasm, particularly when she has been out of school for a number of years. Grade inflation has improved the look of high school transcripts, and a student's more recent paid work or volunteer experience may be a more valid credential. Many college admissions staffs do not consider high school grades important in admitting re-entry students. In an admissions practices survey conducted by an ACT program, 26.5 percent of private four-year-college admissions officers thought that high school grade point averages (GPAs) were an important factor in considering the admission of nontraditional, older first year students; 78.7 percent thought GPAs were an important factor in admissions considerations for traditional first year students (Maxey 1980). Factors considered more important than the GPA in admitting the nontraditional student were the interview (61 percent), the personal goal statement (62 percent), and work experience (43 percent). Unfortunately for re-entry women, only 19 percent of administrators thought community involvement was a very important admissions factor, and only 15 percent considered volunteer experience important (Maxey 1980). Since a number of re-entry women have demonstrated ability through community involvement and volunteer experience rather than through paid employment, the failure of admissions officers to consider such experience importa.. may have a discriminatory effect.

A college that intends to serve the re-entry woman student must examine its admissions criteria to see if they are appropriate

for the older student. Those who are "keepers of the gates" need to recognize the worth of potential students who do not fit the traditional pattern.

FOLLOW-UP AFTER ADMISSIONS

Once a new student has been admitted, will she or he actually appear on campus? Every college has its ways of dealing with this problem. The Midland plan involves the use of a Freshman Corps of Advisors--a group of faculty members selected and trained in the academic advising of new students. The Admissions Office assigns an advisor to each newly admitted student and sends a letter to each new student introducing him or her to this advisor. The advisor sends personal letters, calls each student on the phone, and assists the student to preregister either in person or by mail. When the semester begins, the advisor meets with each student individually as part of final registration and continues to meet with the student at several other points during the semester. Beginning in the fall term of 1981, each faculty advisor met with all of his or her advisees in a six-session minicourse called Preparation for Your College Experience. This course introduced students to college facilities, activities, and procedures (grading systems, graduation requirements, etc.). It also allowed some time for new students to analyze their life and college goals.

How do re-entry students fit into this plan? In times past, these students have enjoyed good relationships with their advisors. However, during the needs assessment process, re-entry students expressed an interest in having a special advisor for themselves--one who would understand how to work with their particular scheduling needs and problems. Meeting this expressed need has become possible since the Admissions Office began a policy of labeling the folders of re-entry students as "NT" (nontraditional). Now the Registrar can send these new students to a particular advisor, who in this case has worked in adult education and was a re-entry student herself. These students will find others like themselves as they meet in their six-session minicourse, and perhaps they will develop a sense of belonging and will support one another.

A college should consider methods for maintaining contact with admitted re-entry students, for while these students do well once they have become involved in their studies, their self-confidence before studies begin is often fragile.

ADVISING TRANSFER STUDENTS

The advisory system outlined above is used for new students only. Transfer students--and many re-entry students are transfer students--are assigned to an academic advisor in their major fields. Sometimes, though a re-entry woman is technically a transfer student, some years have passed since her prior education and she may

be changing majors or uncertain about a choice of majors. Midland now designates three faculty members, in science, humanities, and the arts, to be advisors to re-entry transfer students in a state of transition. By this means the project staff hopes that every re-entry student will find a sympathetic academic advisor at the outset of her or his college experience.

ORIENTATION The advisory process can readily be made to fit re-entry students' needs. Often, orientation cannot. Customarily, the orientation program on this and other small college campuses includes social occasions to encourage dating, a certain amount of good-natured hazing, dormitory get-togethers, and the like. None of this is particularly suited to re-entry students' needs, so few participate. They then begin classes without the sense of community that orientation is meant to foster.

The Midland Project for Re-Entry Students ran over two semesters and included two orientation periods. Orientation activities for re-entry students were conducted each semester, but one semester's activities worked much better than those of the other.

At the outset of the fall semester, re-entry students received mailed invitations to attend one of the regularly scheduled orientation activities, an all-college pig roast on the green. They were told to look for people with orange armbands, so that those re-entering college and the staff concerned with them could find one another and eat together. A few students came and had a good time, but most did not come. Why not? As the program was evaluated later, two reasons surfaced: lack of time and family responsibilities.

Most re-entry students already have home, and often job, responsibilities. It is difficult for them to plan to be on campus at other than class times. It is particularly difficult for those needing child care. The family of a re-entry woman student must make an adjustment when the wife and/or mother goes to school. A woman who may be concerned about leaving home to attend classes may not wish to go off to an orientation dinner by herself, forcing the rest of the family to cope alone. Some colleges have solved this problem by inviting the whole family to attend an orientation event. This may include separate meetings for re-entry students and their spouses as the two groups discuss the conflicts and rewards to be expected when a mate is in school. An event like this can end with a concert or play the whole family may enjoy.

Midland and the project staff were not ready to organize on such a scale, but did plan a successful orientation activity as a coordinated effort of the student personnel office and the support group for re-entry students called Students of Life Experience (SOLE). The student personnel office mailed invitations asking

the new re-entry students to attend a SOLE-sponsored preclass coffee and doughnuts reception in the college student center on the first day of classes. SOLE members followed up the mailed invitations with personal phone calls. This meant that the new students found the student center and some new friends to walk to class with on that first crucial Monday morning. This activity set a good tone for the second semester and helped establish a camaraderie that lasted throughout the term. It also recruited some additional members for the support group. Its success is attributed to holding it at a time when students would be on campus anyway and making it a low-key activity in which a new student could easily invest a minimal amount of time.

Having currently enrolled re-entry students aid in planning and carrying out orientation activities for new re-entry students was effective on the Midland campus. The students themselves are the best source of information about a particular college's re-entry student orientation needs.

STUDENT SERVICES

In a sense, all the services being discussed in this handbook are student services. This section uses the term in a more restricted way, however, to refer to the kinds of services generally handled by student personnel offices, deans of students, etc. These are services in the nonacademic areas of student life with which a college must concern itself. For the 18- to 22-year-old resident student, such services include housing, dining halls, extracurricular activities, social organizations, counseling, health services, and sports facilities.

What services do re-entry students need? The answers to this question will vary on each campus, but certain general areas of concern appear on all campuses. These include needs for physical facilities such as parking spaces and eating places, and social needs such as support, companionship, and counseling. Child care is a very important need for a significant number of students.

PARKING, EATING, AND OTHER BASICS

Physical facilities look different when viewed from the vantage point of a nonresident student. Parking is the first problem that presents itself. Campuses with abundant free parking are certainly at an advantage in attracting re-entry students. A college can also assist its nonresident students by coordinating car pools. Needs assessment on the Midland campus showed little desire for car pooling, but campuses in more heavily populated areas may have considerable need for this service.

Where to eat? Reasonably priced on-campus food services are important to re-entry students, who are often financially pressed. A snack bar will be well patronized. College dining halls may be, also, if their policies regarding people who do not have meal contracts are clearly explained. Re-entry students need to know what services are available to them, how much the services cost, and where they are. They also need to know where they can eat a lunch brought from home and where they are likely to find a comfortable social setting when they need a break. A college brochure or a student handbook designed especially for re-entry students can convey this information.

Where are the rest rooms? And what happens to the physically handicapped student who discovers that the rest rooms are on a

difficult-to-reach floor? It is beyond the scope of this handbook to suggest building renovations. However, it is suggested that when there are options concerning locations for classes and meetings, it is best to hold them in easily found places with appropriate facilities for the handicapped.

POLICIES REGARDING USE OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Sometimes re-entry students are not sure of the degree to which they and/or their families are allowed to use college facilities. May their children use the swimming pool, for example? Is there a family swim time? Could there be a special swimming class for physically handicapped students (who often are older and off-campus students)? Colleges have the opportunity to set clear policies about these and similar questions.

Library policies surfaced as an area of concern on the Midland campus. How does a student who must leave campus at five o'clock to care for her family check out a reserve book that is not allowed to leave the library until a half hour before the 10 P.M. closing time? Library policies should be examined for their impact on re-entry students.

COMMUNICATIONS

A perennial problem is finding ways of getting information to off-campus students. There is no one place or time at which they can be contacted as resident students are during mealtime announcements. Campuses that assign a mailbox to each student probably have the best means of transmitting information. When the mailboxes are located near bulletin boards and faculty mailboxes, communication is enhanced.

Student newspapers are a good way of communicating if they are widely distributed and if they cover the interests of all members of the college community. On the Midland campus, 39 percent of the re-entry students surveyed read the weekly student paper. The paper carried several stories about re-entry students during the course of the project. These stories increased campus awareness of re-entry students and gave this population a greater sense of belonging. (A sample story is reprinted on the next page.)

Bulletin boards are useful, too, and so are message boards located in places where re-entry students congregate. The students need ways of finding each other. That is one of many reasons why a particular place associated with re-entry students can become so important.

A LOUNGE OR CENTER

Many campuses have women's centers. No elaborate facilities are needed for a women's center--a room with comfortable furniture, bulletin boards, and

Students raise families, attend classes

Non-traditionals budget College, home time

by Tammy Real

They attend classes, sometimes study until late at night for tests, fail quizzes, and some make Dean's List. These individuals are students, and yet they are not the "typical co-eds" of the College scenerio.

When they go home, there may be children to feed, groceries to purchase or a house to clean. In these respects, they are different from students who live on campus; they are non-traditionals.

A non-traditional student could be defined as one who has discontinued his or her college education for at least a year and then returns. Most are married, divorced or have not attended school for several years, according to Ruth Weimer, '81, who calls herself a non-traditional.

Most non-traditional students are characterized as having responsibilities and experiences, and many are older than the traditional student, Wiemer said.

While an on-campus student may schedule personal time around a part-time job, studies and social life, a non-traditional student may assume these responsibilities plus rearing a family, Wiemer said.

Non-traditional students may sometimes have difficulties budgeting time between College and family.

"It's almost impossible to attend morning classes if you've been awake with a sick child most of the night," Wiemer said.

Additional obligations

Although Wiemer said that most instructors empathize with the non-traditional students in such situations, some faculty members are not so understanding.

"Almost all of the teachers are understanding about our circumstances. But some instructors do not realize there are outside responsibilities which may present problems beyond our control," she said.

Financial responsibilities can also present difficulties for non-traditionals because most of them do not receive support from their parents.

"A non-traditional student may have children's clothes to buy and utility bills to pay. A traditional student pays for food and rent when he pays tuition. It is easier to shell out the money in a lump sum than budget for these expenses each month," Wiemer said.

Wiemer said, however, that non-traditional students may be eligible for financial assistance in the form of basic grants or the GI bill.

Besides monetary support, some non-traditionals need encouragement to continue their schooling.

"Most on-campus students are 'single-oriented;' they often discuss parties, dates and social functions that may have limited interest to older students," Wiemer said.

"Some non-traditional students may find that 'fitting in' is quite difficult. To help students feel more a part of campus life, Students of Learned Experience, (SOLE), was formed," Wiemer said.

Mildred Sic, associate dean of students, helped organize the group in September.

"Sometimes non-traditional students lack confidence and begin to wonder if they should be in school or not," Sic said.

She said that some non-traditional students are criticized by family members who feel the students should be at home, caring for their children and households.

"SOLE is designed to work as a support system to help these students in stressful times," Sic said.

Special activities

Sic said because campus social life is not geared to these students, activities are being planned for group participants.

Because 60 percent of the 90 non-traditional students at Midland Lutheran College are women, speakers may be asked to discuss problems of women returning to school, Sic said.

Members of SOLE are searching for a regular meeting room where they can gather and discuss problems and study.

Presently, they meet at noon on the second and fourth Friday of each month on the porch in the Administration Building.

Students are enthusiastic and are considering publishing a newsletter to one another informing them about College events concerning non-traditional students, Sic said.

Despite disadvantages of being a non-traditional student, Sic said several advantages exist.

"Non-traditional students seem more sincere as to what they're looking for. They want to get the most from their education that they can," Sic said.

Ken and Jackie Severa, '83, both became members of Alpha Lambda Delta, a freshman honorary.

The couple, who have two children in junior high school, moved from Stanton and enrolled at the College as freshmen.

Jackie Severa, a nursing major, said attending the College "is like a dream come true."

"Advantages outweigh the disadvantages. I didn't have the opportunity to go to college after high school. Now, I feel as if I'm doing something with my life," she said.

Unlike some traditional students, Jackie said that she and her husband do not have great difficulty finding time to spend with their children.

"I have to leave my kids at the breakfast table when I go to my 8 a.m. class, but I am home in the afternoons when they return from school. My husband, who works part-time and attends classes, is also home in the afternoons, she said.

"If we had to work from 8 to 5 each day, we probably wouldn't be able to spend as much time with them," she added.

Jackie said that she and Ken do not set a specific schedule with their children, but each Friday evening is "family night."

There are times when the Severa's social activities may consist of a Parent-Teacher Association meeting or a church picnic.

"We have a lot in common with traditional students. We fail tests, we worry about what to study, we stay awake all night studying—just like a traditional student does," she said.

Nevertheless, Jackie says she is enjoying being a student at Midland College.

Reprinted from The Midland, Friday, October 31, 1980.

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perhaps some lockers and bookcases. The ideal would be to have a center staffed with counselors, but just having a place where support groups can meet and where students can expect to find one another is important. An unused dormitory room could be set aside for this purpose, if it were in a building close to the classroom areas and parking lots.

Perhaps no room is available, or perhaps there is resistance to having a women's center or a special place for re-entry students of both sexes. In this case, there are still ways to create a sense of belonging for re-entry students, although the job becomes more difficult. In the absence of a room, one must start with a group. The re-entry student group formed on the Midland campus tried several meeting places, none of which was really suitable. As the group members got acquainted they found that many of their number frequented the student center at the same time of day, and they became a presence there.

The student center space was shared; many faculty members also eat lunch at the center snack bar, and any student may stop by to play pool or watch the large-screen television. A camaraderie developed among re-entry students, traditional students, and faculty. The student center became an informal communications center, too.

Interesting social consequences can develop as a result of the way facilities are laid out. It will take a thoughtful local analysis for each individual campus to see how its re-entry students are affected by the way the campus uses space.

SUPPORT GROUPS Re-entry students' need for support and a sense of community is great. Many begin classes in a state of transition and uncertainty, and frequently with a good deal of unjustified self-doubt. Support provided at the outset can make the difference for these students. As one wrote, "I was scared the first week of school, but I met with a group of nontraditional students who helped me with my questions and helped me feel more at ease. Without it, I probably would have dropped out." The value of a support group cannot be stressed enough. Given its importance, how is one formed?

The Midland group, Students of Life Experience (SOLE), was founded by some interested students, aided by project and college staff. Posters announcing the first meeting were placed on the doors of all classroom buildings; word-of-mouth publicity did the rest. The initial meeting and subsequent ones were Friday brown bag lunches. The day and time were chosen because many classes follow the Monday-Wednesday-Friday pattern, and none is scheduled over the Friday noon hour. By its own choice, the group includes men and women, sponsors both educational and social activities, elects officers, and has established itself as a regular campus organization. This means

that technically it is not a support group in the usual sense of a group of people who meet to discuss one particular common concern. However, as the student comment above shows, the group is supportive. It has created a sense of community among the re-entry students, and through it minisupport groups have formed. Single parents have found one another, study groups for various courses have been created, and friendships have been made.

PEER COUNSELING

In effect, SOLE members are practicing an informal system of peer counseling. Re-entry students who have been on campus awhile provide some of the best help for one another. The disadvantage of this informal system is that it does not reach all of the students who might need it. On some campuses, more complete peer counseling systems are set up by the college itself. On these campuses, re-entry students involved in counseling receive training and compensation from the college. One model for such a program is the Second Wind project (Carter 1978). Another is Alverno College's Exchange Group Counseling System. In this system, each peer counselor keeps in touch with a group of ten re-entry students. She reports to the staff facilitator of the program on any problems developing among them (Neises 1980).

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

Some students may need more help than their peer counselors can provide. The re-entry student population may include people who are going through serious life transitions such as divorce, widowhood, new parenthood, or career change. Some re-entry students lead very stressful lives--for example, most single parents must juggle the conflicting demands of parenting, finding money, and going to school. A college could help by evaluating its counseling program to see if counselors experienced in adult life problems are available. If none is, a referral system might be developed in cooperation with professionals in the local area. In Fremont, for example, Midland students may join a parent support group run by a professional counselor.

CAREER COUNSELING

Re-entry women students may face a different career situation than traditional undergraduates, particularly if they have been out of the work force for some years. They may need:

- Aptitude and vocational testing
- Encouragement and support in considering nontraditional career options
- Role models, such as successful graduates and women working on the college staff and elsewhere
- Internship experiences

- Practical information about how to handle interviews, write resumes, etc.
- Job placement services

All these services may be available to undergraduates already, in which case the needs assessment process can tell which services are especially effective for re-entry students and which might need improvement.

One common area of concern is with the materials available in career planning centers. Are these materials valid for people of all ages? Are the testing materials free of sex bias? Do they show women entering a variety of careers, not just the traditional "women's jobs"? Are there confidence-building materials available for older women? Many interesting new materials are widely available, and some are free. For example, the Equitable Life Assurance Society provides free worksheets entitled "Analyzing Your Abilities." These worksheets help women translate their homemaking and community work experiences into job descriptions.*

More important than the attitudes conveyed in the career planning materials are those conveyed by the faculty. Do staff members see all the possibilities open to re-entry students? Do they help these students to take risks and grow? These questions of faculty attitudes will be considered in the section on faculty services.

SPECIAL COURSES, EVENTS, AND PROGRAMS

Re-entry students often enjoy the cultural programs available on campuses. In fact, some may have enrolled because of such programs. Thirty-nine percent of the re-entry students surveyed by the Midland project attended art exhibits, concerts, and other on-campus cultural events. Some campuses host a luncheon lecture series for community women (e.g., the Tower Luncheon and Lecture Series at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee). Midland College had an excellent turnout at its evening lecture series "Three Women by Three Women," held in the county museum.

In addition to these more traditional offerings, a number of colleges now have created special courses for women returning to school. The content of these courses is intended to help women gain self-confidence and direction and to sharpen the skills they need to become students again. An example of such a course is Alverno College's PACE (Personal Advancement through Continuing Education) program. It consists of eleven weeks of classes devoted to the development of personal growth and re-entry skills,

*For copies of the worksheets, write Human Resources Department, Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S., 1285 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.

plus a choice of Saturday workshops. Topics covered include personal effectiveness, life planning, decision making, job-seeking strategies, time management, and more.

A college need not develop a full-scale course to provide special programming for re-entry students. Designing workshops, short courses, or an informal guest lecture series can accomplish the same ends. As mentioned earlier, the Midland project, in cooperation with SOLE, established a series of brown bag lunch meetings. Local resource people came to lead informal discussions on topics of interest to the re-entry students. The sessions of the Snack Bar Symposium, as it was called, covered:

- Introduction to Effectiveness Training for Women
- Local Area Job Market Update
- Test-Taking Tactics
- Building Self-Confidence
- Stress Skills Workshop
- Sexual Harassment on the Job (a showing of the film Work-place Hustle)
- Time Management
- Parent Support Group

These programs were open to everyone on campus. As the series progressed, it gathered faculty and staff support, showing that the topics were interesting to many people. The only complaint about the series was that the sessions were too short.

A series such as this is easy to arrange and is inexpensive. Cost per program ranged from a high of $50 for an out-of-town speaker to a low of $4.50 for a film mailing expense. Some speakers would have been willing to volunteer their services if needed. Frequently, speakers can be found who were themselves re-entry students; they provide the present students with successful role models and pertinent information. Five of the eight Snack Bar Symposia were presented by women professionals who had also been re-entry students.

CHILD CARE Colleges that offer early childhood education may also have the facilities to provide a service for re-entry students who need child care. Although child care is not a need of all re-entry students, it is crucial for some. The ideal response to this need would be a child care center. Such a center could provide an important benefit to college staff as well as to the re-entry students, helping to decrease turnover and increase scheduling flexibility. If a college cannot provide a center on its own, perhaps it could arrange a cooperative agreement with an area institution or industry. In the Midland area,

a local hospital was, at the time of our project, seriously considering establishing a day care center for employees' children and was willing to finance such a center if a cooperating organization--in this case, the college--provided a physical facility. (No arrangements had been completed by the end date of the project.)

Colleges that cannot arrange for a facility may still serve their students' child care needs by keeping a list of local child care providers for students to use. This list could include information about the location, cost, and availability of each provider.

Another option is for a college to aid students in setting up cooperative arrangements among themselves. Establishing a parents' baby-sitting co-op can also be a project for a re-entry student group. Further information about campus child care may be found in Renée Creange's Campus Child Care: A Challenge for the 80's (see References on page 51).

PARENT LOCATOR NUMBER

Parents of school-age children do not have the same child care needs as parents of preschoolers, but they may still have a concern about being available to their children should an emergency arise. Some colleges offer a parent locator number that children may call. On the Midland campus, the Project for Re-Entry Students staff set up a schedule card file at the college switchboard. The cards in the parent locator file listed where these students were to be found while on campus--during out-of-class times as well as during scheduled class hours. Offering such a service can be reassuring to parents and their children.

FACULTY SERVICES

Judging by the questionnaire responses of Midland's re-entry students, faculty members can be both the joy and the bane of such a student's existence. As has been noted, the willingness of faculty members to give personal attention to students on the Midland campus appeared as a strength of the institution: "All of my teachers have been friendly and helpful," said one student. "Faculty and staff great," was another comment. Such remarks as these were in the majority.

However, there are always some exceptions. As another student explained, "I wish some instructors treated you more like an adult than like someone straight out of high school. Some talk down and others lay down so many rules that make it sound as if they think that adult students who may be as old or older than the instructor have absolutely no sense of responsibility." Adult students are keenly aware of condescension. They are also keenly aware of their off-campus responsibilities, and appreciate the faculty members who are sensitive to this, as this comment reveals: "I would say the staff and instructors have been the best aspects [of the college experience] outside of the educational aspect. They have been very encouraging and accommodating, especially when it has come to working around my family. Thanks!"

FACULTY ATTITUDES

What these comments reveal is that faculty members' attitudes toward re-entry students have a considerable impact on the kind of educational experience a re-entry student has. The quality of this experience has a direct impact on student retention. For this reason, it is essential that faculty members learn to recognize and respond to the special needs of adult students.

For example, these students commonly feel an initial terror at attending college classes. Though their ability may be considerable, they often lack self-confidence and self-esteem, particularly if they have not recently been in a work place or classroom setting. First impressions and first classes are particularly important in establishing personal rapport with these students and in demonstrating the approachability of the instructor and applicability of the class material. One student in an evening literature class revealed after the first class that she had broken out in a cold sweat from the anxiety of

attending. Feeling secure enough to make this confession at the end of class, she went on to become a top student in the course. On the other hand, a college mathematics teacher once wondered aloud why the chalk in his classroom was always wet after his students wrote on the blackboard. That those sweaty palms indicate math anxiety may not be obvious to teachers of the old school who are not accustomed to attending to the affective atmosphere of the academic classroom.

Approachability is particularly important for retention because, although re-entry women students may be inexperienced as students, they are very experienced as consumers. Frequently, they are using their own money to pay for the relatively high tuition of a private college, and they expect value, especially effective teaching, in return for these tuition dollars. They also expect understanding of their life situations from the instructor as one adult to another. For example, one faculty member would not grant permission for a pregnant student to have his lectures taped during the week that she would have to miss class to have the baby. Her understandable response to this refusal was to drop the course.

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND INCREASING AWARENESS

Can faculty attitudes be changed? If so, how? Certainly, a risky approach to the problem mentioned above would be to attempt to institute policies to legislate a sensitivity to re-entry students' needs. Faculty prerogatives in general are not to be tampered with if one expects to receive faculty support. A less certain but more tactful and, in the long run, more effective approach may be to find ways of increasing faculty awareness of re-entry students and their special needs, trusting that a greater awareness of a problem will bring about an increased responsiveness to it. This educational approach was the method the Project for Re-Entry Students chose. The particular tactics used were (1) consulting individually with faculty and staff members, (2) distributing reading materials on re-entry students' needs, and (3) holding faculty/staff workshops.

Individual Consultation

Because of the method of distributing the re-entry student questionnaires via faculty members, project staff met individually with more than one-third of the faculty during the needs assessment stage of the project. These visits made faculty members aware of the program and enlisted their participation in finding out about the needs of re-entry students. People become more concerned about an effort when they are part of it.

As the re-entry student group became more visible on campus, and as the project gained recognition, an informal information and referral system developed. Faculty members concerned about particular students consulted with project staff; students concerned

about particular faculty members did the same. There seemed to be a campus need to identify someone on the staff as the official person concerned with re-entry students. The project filled this need and through its existence raised the awareness level about re-entry students' concerns.

Distributing Reading Materials

When the Midland project completed the needs assessment, a copy of the narrative summary of the survey results and an annotated copy of the questionnaire with numbers and percentages of responses on it were placed in each faculty member's and administrator's mailbox. These materials were distributed as a preview to the first faculty/staff workshop, to create interest in it.

Before the second faculty/staff workshop another set of materials was distributed to those who planned to attend, and to all others who indicated interest in having materials. This packet included copies of the following items:

1. A fact sheet giving re-entry student enrollment figures and noting the high ratio of women to men

2. Loribeth Weinstein's The Counseling Needs of Re-Entry Women (see References, page 52)

3. Miriam R. B. Lacher's "On Advising Undergraduate Women: A Psychologist's Advice to Academic Advisers" (see References, page 51)

4. Donea L. Shane's "The Returning-to-School Syndrome" (see References, page 52)

These materials were chosen to increase awareness of the size of the re-entry population on campus (item 1), the particular needs of re-entry women (item 2), the self-confidence problems women students face as a result of a sex-stereotyped environment (item 3), and the adjustments students who are retraining for a professional degree must make (item 4).

Do faculty and staff members read materials given to them? Do these materials affect how they think about things? The first question can be answered to some degree here. A final evaluation survey of the project showed that 80 percent of the administrators and 81 percent of the faculty members surveyed had read materials provided by the project (56 percent of all faculty and staff returned the survey). This was the highest participation rate for any project-sponsored activity involving faculty and staff.

To answer the second question is more difficult. Faculty and staff rated the value of the materials to them as 3.25 on a scale

of 1 to 4. It is difficult to evaluate such a global concept as an attitude change from a few questions, particularly since attitude change is a fluid, complex, and long-term process. Since some staff members specifically noted on the evaluation questionnaire that their attitudes toward re-entry students changed as a result of the project, it may be safe to say that the materials had some role in producing this effect.

Faculty/Staff Workshops

Group processes are important in creating attitude changes. The project held two faculty/staff workshops to increase the awareness of the needs of re-entry women students. The first workshop, "Re-Entry: Splashdown or Soft Landing?" presented the life situations and role conflicts of rural Nebraska women as they decide to enter or re-enter college. The attitudinal barriers to re-entry listed in the rationale section of this handbook were covered. The purpose of the workshop was to show how the re-entry process appears from the student's point of view. A second, follow-up workshop presented strategies for dealing with re-entry student needs. Specific suggestions were given on what faculty members and the college as a whole might do. The second workshop included three sessions:

- Academic Advising of the Nontraditional Student
- The Returning-to-School Syndrome: What It Is, How to Deal with It
- Strategies for Attracting and Retaining the Nontraditional Student

These workshops were well attended and well received. Both faculty and administrators rated them as valuable. Project staff evaluations of them led to the following guidelines for planning such workshops:

1. If possible, set the workshop for a time when faculty and staff are on campus, yet not scheduled for any other specific commitment. This generally means that the beginning of the first semester is the ideal time, unless a college has other regular periods set aside for faculty-staff development.

2. To increase participation, enlist administrative support and supplement written invitations with personal contacts.

3. Outside speakers add interest and authority to a program. It can be effective to use a male-female team of speakers so that all participants have someone with whom they can identify.

4. A continuous format, including perhaps a meal and/or a coffee break, is more effective in building momentum and camaraderie than a series of individual sessions at different times or locations.

CONVINCING THE UNCONVINCED

One difficulty with workshops and all other methods of reaching faculty and staff is that those who participate the most fully are generally the faculty and staff already concerned. Those who roundly assert that "We don't have many re-entry students" or that "Every student is treated as an individual here and we have no need for special programs" probably will not read the materials or attend the workshops. This truth of human relations just may have to be accepted. As was pointed out in the section on principles of program design, it is not necessary to have universal support to accomplish something. Workshops may help establish a favorable climate of opinion that ultimately may affect the laggards.

CURRICULUM CONCERNS

One final area of faculty involvement with re-entry students is in curriculum content and planning. This responsibility is handled differently at various institutions, and it may not be useful to suggest specific strategies. Campus needs assessments should reveal areas of concern on a particular campus. Some questions for discovering the impact of curriculum on re-entry women students are the following:

1. Are physical education requirements suited to older students' capacities? Must re-entry students compete athletically with younger students?

2. Are there opportunities to find help for students who need to brush up on study skills or reduce their math anxiety?

3. Could more courses be offered in the late afternoon or evening? How do scheduling practices relate to off-campus student needs?

4. Are courses in women's studies available?

Re-entry students may be able to suggest some helpful curricular changes that can be made without adding staff or subjecting the curriculum to extensive revision.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

What impact do the usual procedures of a small private college have on the re-entry woman student? Admissions procedures have been discussed. This section of the handbook deals with other procedural matters and policies that affect the re-entry student. In particular, it is concerned with registration procedures, transfer of credit and methods of granting credit for college-level knowledge, and financial aid.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

An array of strange forms to fill out can be intimidating, particularly if the forms use unfamiliar terminology or abbreviations, and if different forms must be filled out at different locations. Friendly, helpful support staff at the various offices involved in the registration process can make quite a difference in re-entry students' first impressions of college life. Registration will be easier for them if procedures are short and clear, and if registration can be completed over the noon hour or during late afternoon and evening hours. Interviews with re-entry students who have been through the procedure will pinpoint local areas of difficulty.

On the Midland campus, re-entry students were generally satisfied with the registration procedure. One difficulty, however, had to do with preregistration, when students not yet on campus sign up for the next semester's classes. Preregistration is done in class order; that is, first seniors preregister, then juniors, and so on. A re-entry student may not be able to come to campus on the particular day scheduled for the appropriate class. One student made a special trip to campus to meet with her advisor, only to discover that the Registrar's Office was not yet accepting materials for her class. The new procedure is that faculty advisors will hold the completed materials for such a student, and take them to the Registrar's Office at the appropriate time.

Every college has its procedural hazards. Attention to the impact of procedures on re-entry students can make quite a difference in their experience while not costing a college much in additional time or money.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT

Another concern of re-entry students that usually ends up in the registrar's domain is the question

of credit for previous college work. Many re-entry students have experienced interrupted educational careers. For instance, women may have dropped out of college to marry; they may have transferred to follow a husband's job change; they may be changing major fields and job objectives since their earlier college days; or they may be returning to the same college, and graduation requirements have changed since their previous coursework. A college that does not frustrate these students by requiring them to pay to repeat work already done will win their gratitude and attendance.

One recommendation in this area is to be sure that the re-entry woman student knows that her credits can be transferred, and realizes that questions of transfer of credits are negotiable. Some students will not mention their previous credits unless an advisor or registrar brings up the subject. One student involved in the Midland project revealed only toward the end of the semester that she had completed nearly a year's work at a nearby community college in a field unrelated to her current major. Encouraged by project staff, she sent for her transcript and emerged from the Registrar's Office with eight hours of credit transferred and one of her college requirements covered. These credits also changed her status from first year student to sophomore, and eased the financial burden of her education. Faculty advisors and registration staff should be alert to discuss the question of credits from previous college attendance.

A second recommendation is that credit transfer policies be as liberal as they can while still preserving institutional standards. Which credits are genuinely outdated? What courses at other institutions are equivalent to the ones offered at one's home institution? How cumbersome is the system by which transfer of credit decisions are made? One method of streamlining the decision-making process is to analyze the curricula of the schools from which students most commonly tr[illegible]er, and to set policies on that basis.

Credit for College-Level Knowledge

Another method of granting credit, now used by half of the postsecondary institutions in this country (Fisher-Thompson 1979), is offering credit for college-level knowledge that the student has acquired by means other than for-credit coursework at a postsecondary institution. For example, a re-entry student may have acquired a college-level knowledge of introductory accounting while on the job. The question of how to grant such credit is handled in many ways. Some colleges, such as Alverno, use a competency based curriculum in which all students are placed in courses at the level of their demonstrated ability. Others, such as Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, require that a student submit a portfolio of work and a written rationale explaining why this should be considered the equivalent of a particular course. For

information about methods of assessing college-level knowledge, write to the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL).*

Another source of information is How to Get College Credit for What You Have Learned as a Homemaker and Volunteer, by Ekstrom, Harris, and Lockheed (see References, page 51).

Offering credit for experiential learning sends a positive message to the re-entry woman student; it suggests that the college recognizes the value of what she has accomplished outside the college walls. By shortening the amount of coursework required for the degree, it also makes college work more attainable financially.

Credit by Examination

Another commonly used method of offering credit for college-level knowledge is the use of nationally standardized examinations, such as the College Entrance Examination Board's College Level Examination Program (CLEP), or American College Testing's Proficiency Examination Program (PEP). The number and variety of such examinations is constantly increasing. One source of current information is the College Proficiency Examinations Program in New York.**

One possible difficulty in using standardized tests as a method for re-entry women students to receive credit is that some of these students suffer from test anxiety and so may be unwilling to try the tests. For such students, it may be wise to defer taking tests until after they have successfully completed a course or two and have become encouraged about their abilities. It will be helpful if the examinations are offered frequently and in a nonthreatening atmosphere.

FINANCIAL AID

By far the greatest need that Midland re-entry students showed in administrative services was for financial aid. This is also the hardest need to meet. Re-entry women find themselves in an unusually difficult situation regarding financial aid for several reasons:

1. Many are part-time students, which may make them ineligible for financial aid.

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*Address: The American City Building, Suite 212, Columbia, MD 21044.

**Address: State Education Department, Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230.

2. "Family income" frequently means "husband's income." This creates a problem for the woman who does not feel that she has a right to use family income for her education. It creates a bigger problem if her husband agrees with her.

3. Financial aid forms may require inappropriate information from adult students, e.g., parents' income.

4. Financial aid staff may favor traditional students in the awarding of financial aid.

Colleges can do little about family politics, but they can do something about offering financial aid to part-time students, offering aid equitably to all students, and using financial aid forms appropriate to re-entry student situations. It is also important to assure re-entry women students that financial aid is as appropriate for them as for all students. As a rural woman told the Roots and Wings staff, "For many rural women, the term 'financial aid' for college implies a handout and therefore is unacceptable. Furthermore, if a financial disclosure statement is required for aid, mature women would resist filing it" (Walsh et al. 1981, p. 180). Re-entry women must be assured that it is part of the regular admissions procedure to apply for financial aid, and that they are entitled to aid on the same basis as any other student.

On the Midland campus, students were pleased with the treatment they received from the Financial Aid Office. They just wished there had been more aid available. Since much of the financial aid picture is determined at the federal level, colleges may not be able to institute large-scale increases in aid available to re-entry women. However, on the local scale, using means appropriate to the approach of this handbook, some efforts can be made. In Fremont, for example, the local Business and Professional Women's Club offers several scholarships for postsecondary education, so the project staff procured a supply of application forms for re-entry students, and encouraged them to apply. Cooperative arrangements between college and community can thus provide some funding.

Also, it is useful to know about local industries that will pay all or part of their employees' tuition, and to be sure that employed students are aware of such arrangements. Additional suggestions are made by Margaret C. Dunkle in Financial Aid: Helping Re-Entry Women Pay College Costs (see References, page 51).*

*Available from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.

EVALUATION

Once college staff members have instituted programs to meet the needs of re-entry women students, how may they determine if what they have done is effective? There are many approaches to evaluation, each with its advantages and limitations. Combining several methods of evaluation lets evaluators capitalize on the strengths of each. Some that may prove helpful follow.

ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION STATISTICS

If a small college succeeds in attracting more re-entry women students, enrollment figures should tell the story. If a higher proportion of re-entry women stay enrolled after a re-entry program has begun than remained in school before, this is a measure of its probable success. To use such measures, a college must collect some baseline figures for re-entry student enrollment and retention and, obviously, these figures must be collected before a program is instituted. Also, it may take several years before enrollment and retention trends become clear. For this reason, the one-year Midland Project for Re-Entry Students could not use this method of evaluation.

Another limitation of longitudinal patterns is that they are not easy to interpret. Many factors can affect enrollment and retention, so these figures alone would not show the success of a re-entry project (although an increased enrollment or retention percentage certainly would be a good indicator). Longitudinal measures also do not make it possible to determine which particular changes or programs were the most effective. To gather more specific data, other methods must be used.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

The success of group activities may be measured by the numbers of people who participate in them, and by the responses of these participants. The Project for Re-Entry Students staff used short evaluation forms for activities like the Snack Bar Symposia or the faculty/staff workshops. These provided immediate feedback on each individual program. The forms used sentence completion questions such as, "What I liked best about this program was . . . " or "This program could have been improved by . . . " The information gathered on these forms was helpful both in planning new programs and in evaluating past ones. It indicated what topics, approaches, and format were most successful. For example, many wrote favorably of the

informality of the Snack Bar Symposia. They valued the ease of discussion and the approachability of the leaders.

INTERVIEWS Evaluations by participants obviously do not reach nonparticipants. A more inclusive method of evaluation can be the interview. The Midland project staff used a series of personal interviews conducted by an outside evaluator to assess the project's impact on faculty and staff members. The names of the interviewees were selected by choosing every fifth name on the faculty-staff list. Interviews were chosen as the method to measure attitudes because they can elicit more varied and complex information than questionnaires can. As Millsap, Bagenstos, and Talburtt write, "Interviews are most often used when . . . one doesn't really know the range or content of all possible answers . . . " (1979, p. 30). The Midland interview series showed that while staff were universally aware of the project, their degree of commitment to its goals varied according to their beliefs about the numbers of re-entry students likely to enroll on campus, and their perceptions of these students as needing special services.

SURVEYS To reach larger numbers of people than may be feasible with the interview method, one may resort to the written questionnaire. If the questionnaire is to evaluate a particular local program, it will need to be designed locally. Useful models are available to make the process of instrument design easier. The Project for Re-Entry Students staff used the approach, although not the specific questions, of the survey instrument described by Mezirow and Rose in An Evaluation Guide for College Women's Re-Entry Programs (Mezirow and Rose 1978). They used the perceptive discrepancy assessment method, in which various staff, student, administrator, and/or community groups are asked similar or identical questions, and the differences in responses to each question among the various groups are compared.

The Midland project staff designed an instrument that surveyed campus perceptions about re-entry students and participation in and perceived value of the various activities conducted by the project staff. This instrument was given to traditional students (specifically, to the student senate), re-entry students, faculty, and administrators. The perceptive discrepancy assessment method produced some interesting results. For example, although only 27 percent of the traditional students and 38 percent of the faculty thought the college should provide child care for re-entry students, 50 percent of the administrators supported the idea, as did 81 percent of the re-entry students. This question revealed quite a discrepancy in attitude among the various groups. By contrast, the question of offering financial aid was much less controversial. From 82 to 100 percent of each group thought financial aid should be available to re-entry students.

Differences like these can help explain why some program ideas are successful and others encounter resistance.

Additional help in designing evaluation instruments, particularly for women's programs, may be found in Women's Educational Equity Act Program Evaluation Handbook, by Fernandes, Edwards, and Felker; and Women's Studies Evaluation Handbook, by Millsap, Bagenstos, and Talburtt (see References, page 51). Both these sources contain bibliographies useful for further research in evaluation.

SUBJECTIVE MEASURES Objective data are important, and they are particularly necessary for new programs such as women's programs, which do not have the acceptance of tradition behind them. But there are other ways, less quantifiable but more heartwarming, by which a college staff may know that things are going well. Some examples are: a student relearns how to study and moves from a D on the first test of the semester to an A on the last; new people come to the support group meetings and previous members drop out because they no longer need a support group; a welfare mother graduates with a business degree and starts a well-paying job; a professor keeps toys in his or her office so that a student's child will be occupied while she is being advised. Signs like these show that a college has become receptive to re-entry women students and is reaping the rewards of working with them.

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APPENDIX A

SPECIAL SURVEY OF MIDLAND LUTHERAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

College Services for Adults Checklist

The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover what services that a small private college like Midland might provide would be the most helpful to adult students returning to continue their education.

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much
1. RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION SERVICES				
To what extent would the following be of value to you?				
a. Community programs explaining what the college has to offer	1	2	3	4
b. College brochure featuring adult students and giving information tailored to off-campus student needs	1	2	3	4
c. A special orientation program for adult students	1	2	3	4
d. Course registration with an experienced adult student helping each new adult student (buddy system)	1	2	3	4
e. A special academic advisor for new adult students	1	2	3	4
f. Other (please specify) _____				
_____	1	2	3	4

2. STUDENT SERVICES	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much
To what extent would the following be of value to you?				
a. A bike rack for off-campus commuters	1	2	3	4
b. Car pool coordination	1	2	3	4
c. A parent locator telephone number by which students' children could reach their parents at school in an emergency	1	2	3	4
d. Child care	1	2	3	4
e. A support group of and for adult students	1	2	3	4
f. Noontime special programs geared to adult student needs, such as:	1	2	3	4
• sharpening study skills	1	2	3	4
• test-taking tactics	1	2	3	4
• self-confidence building	1	2	3	4
• job-seeking tactics	1	2	3	4
• job market update	1	2	3	4
• time management	1	2	3	4
• other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4
g. Counseling services such as:	1	2	3	4
• financial counseling	1	2	3	4
• career counseling	1	2	3	4
• academic skills counseling	1	2	3	4
• personal counseling	1	2	3	4
h. A lounge for adult students	1	2	3	4
i. Increased awareness of adult students by present student organizations (honor societies, sororities/fraternities, student government, other [please specify])_____ _____	1	2	3	4
j. A directory of off-campus students to facilitate car pooling, shared baby-sitting, studying together, and the like	1	2	3	4

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much
k. Provision for the needs of handicapped students	1	2	3	4
l. Other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4

3. Which two of the services you rated as valuable in question 2 would be most helpful to you in returning to college?

4. FACULTY SERVICES

To what extent would the following be of value to you?

a. Change in attendance policy (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4
b. Course assignments compatible with adult students' experience and responsibilities	1	2	3	4
c. Increased faculty awareness of adult students' needs	1	2	3	4
d. Additional course offerings such as:	1	2	3	4
• women's studies (examples: Women in Literature, Psychology of Sex Roles, Women in Science, Total Woman or Real Woman?)	1	2	3	4
• assertiveness training or effectiveness training	1	2	3	4
• life-planning workshops	1	2	3	4
• parenting workshops	1	2	3	4
• other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4
e. Other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4

5. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

To what extent would the following be of value to you?

a. Financial aid	1	2	3	4
b. Transfer of academic credits from or to other institutions	1	2	3	4

		Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much
c.	Credit by examination (such as the English proficiency test, CEPT)	1	2	3	4
d.	Credit for life experience	1	2	3	4
e.	Courses scheduled at different times (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4
f.	Physical education requirement modified for older students	1	2	3	4
g.	Other changes in course requirements (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4
h.	Job placement service geared to adult students' needs	1	2	3	4
i.	Other (please specify) _____ _____	1	2	3	4

6. Please indicate your current student status (check all that apply).

_____ a. Taking course for credit

_____ b. Taking noncredit course

_____ c. Full-time student (taking twelve or more credit hours this semester)

_____ d. Part-time student (taking fewer than twelve credit hours this semester)

_____ e. Taking daytime classes

_____ f. Taking evening classes

7. Which presently available college services do you use (check all that apply)?

_____ a. Faculty advisor

_____ b. Teaching-Learning Center

_____ c. Library

_____ d. Financial aid office

_____ e. Student newspaper

_____ f. Student Union snack bar

_____ g. Art exhibits, concerts, other cultural events

_____ h. Sports events or facilities (gym, swimming pool, etc.)

_____ i. Other (please specify) _____

8. Would you identify one or two of the best aspects of your experiences at Midland Lutheran College so far? Please explain them as best you can.

9. What have been one or two major difficulties for you to overcome in continuing your education?

10. How did you overcome these difficulties, or what factors changed to make it possible for you to continue your education?

11. How did you learn about Midland College and its programs?

12. Please list one or two (or more if you like) suggestions as to how the college can improve its services to the adult student.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

PROJECT FOR RE-ENTRY STUDENTS
NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The Project for Re-Entry Students conducted a survey of Midland Lutheran College students, enrolled during November 1980, who were returning to continue their education. The purpose of the survey was to identify the needs of re-entry students in this small private college setting. The students filled out two questionnaires as part of the survey. The first was a standardized product from American College Testing, the Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey (ALNAS). The project has not yet received the results from this instrument. The second questionnaire was designed by the project staff specifically for Midland students. Results from it are reported here in a narrative summary. More detailed information is available upon request.

STUDENT PROFILE

Of the 72 questionnaires returned, about one-quarter of the respondents were men, and three-quarters were women. About two-thirds of the students were married; the rest were unmarried or separated. No students under the age of 20 received the questionnaire. Thirty-one percent of the respondents were aged 20 to 25, 61 percent were over 25, and 8 percent did not indicate their ages. Most were taking courses for credit; a few were taking noncredit courses. Half the students were full-time and half part-time. Daytime students slightly outnumbered the evening school students; some respondents were taking both day and evening classes.

RESULTS

In the areas of recruitment and orientation, the questionnaire respondents indicated a strong desire for a brochure containing information tailored to off-campus student needs. Interest in having community programs explaining what the college has to offer was also high. Many also strongly supported the notion of having a special academic advisor for new returning students. Some of the write-in suggestions added that this person should not be affiliated with a particular department (or perhaps should not feel the need to promote a certain department to the student).

Considering possible student services, the respondents showed little interest in car pooling, but considerable interest in having a directory of off-campus students to facilitate studying together or sharing baby-sitting. Interest was also high in having a support group for re-entry students and in various kinds of counseling services, particularly career counseling. Although some students have no need for child care, those who do need

child care give it a very high priority. Interest was divided on the question of whether current student organizations should be more aware of off-campus students. Some do not care, while others feel that off-campus students should have a representative in the student senate and/or that honor societies should count civic activities, working, and parenting in lieu of membership in campus organizations when evaluating off-campus students' qualifications for admission.

In the area of faculty services, there was considerable interest in additional course offerings, but no clear mandate as to what these courses should be. Write-in comments expressed a need for a wider variety of evening school courses, and several suggested that classes be offered in the late afternoon. Attendance policy has presented problems for some students who sometimes are not sure how to report an excused absence, or who wonder whether a child's illness will be accepted as an excused absence for the parent.

Of very high priority in the area of administrative services was financial aid. Since many of these students have attended--or will attend--other institutions, interest in transferring credits to or from Midland is high. Also rating high was credit by examination or credit for life experience. Finally, expanded job placement services geared to adult student needs received a hearty mandate.

Asked to indicate which presently available college services they use, three-quarters of the students said they use the library. Half consulted their faculty advisors, a figure that correlates closely with the number of daytime students completing the survey. Slightly less than half visited the financial aid office; 39 percent attended art exhibits, concerts, or other cultural events; 35 percent used the Student Union snack bar; 39 percent read The Midland; 21 percent attended sports events or used athletic facilities on campus; and 12 percent used the Teaching-Learning Center.

In response to the open-ended question "Would you identify one or two of the best aspects of your experiences at Midland Lutheran College so far?" the most frequent reply was that faculty and staff interest in the individual student is most valuable. "All of my teachers have been friendly and helpful," wrote one, while others named particular people who had given them extra attention or made them feel capable and at home. The students value the small classes and the friendliness on campus. They also feel personally challenged and exhilarated by the experience of going back to college. Some identified art shows, films, other events, or particular classes as the best aspects of their Midland experience.

Asked about the major difficulties they faced in continuing their education, the students singled out finding the time and the money as far and away the greatest problems--problems with which many of them continue to struggle. Most of these students carry multiple responsibilities at home, job, and school. One student said it for many: "When I go to school, work, and take care of my family, I am so busy I wonder if I will make it." Some deal with these pressures by sacrificing sleep. Most are also making a considerable financial sacrifice and are learning to deal with a reduced standard of living.

Another difficult adjustment for some is learning to study again and overcoming the nervousness of being in competition with younger students. Other common barriers to continuing education among Midland Lutheran College's re-entry students are the need for child care and the complications of transferring credits to and from Midland as a consequence of family moves and interrupted education.

Asked how they learned about the college, most students said they learned from living in the area and from the newspaper, friends and relatives, alumni, or the church.

A final question asked for suggestions on how the college might improve its services to the adult student. One suggestion was that the sensitivity shown by many faculty and staff members should be shown by all. "I wish some instructors treated you more like an adult than like someone straight out of high school. Some talk down and others lay down so many rules that make it sound as if they think that adult students who may be as old or older than the instructor have absolutely no sense of responsibility," one student said. Other suggestions repeated ideas mentioned earlier in the questionnaire. Some additional suggestions were that college procedures and graduation requirements be clarified, and that off-campus students receive more information about events on campus.

WHAT THE PROJECT WILL DO WITH THESE RESULTS

The objectives of the Project for Re-Entry Students include finding and testing low-cost strategies for making the small private college environment more receptive to re-entry students. There may not be low-cost ways to meet all the needs that the survey revealed. However, there are some things the project can work on and will be working on in the next few months. For example, a support group for re-entry students, SOLE (Students of Life Experience), already exists and has shown value in student support and retention. Orientation materials and programs for off-campus students will be designed. It may not be practical to offer child care on campus, but the project is able to prepare a directory of available child care providers in the area, a resource that could be useful to faculty and staff as well. Several other activities are planned, including lunchtime programs for re-entry students and a faculty/staff workshop in adult education.

The survey revealed that as a small, friendly college, Midland has much to offer returning adult students. The project staff hopes to help the college attract these students, and to help the students find what they need at the college.

APPENDIX C

BROCHURE FOR RE-ENTRY STUDENTS

Should I Try College At My Age?

. . . Consider Midland

Is it too late to go to college?

It's never too late to go to college. College is not reserved for those fresh out of high school, and today people of all ages attend college. When you decide to enter college, you will join people of all ages learning new skills such as computer programming. You will join people of all ages adding to their job credentials, perhaps finishing an A. A. degree in secretarial science, or completing a B. A. degree to add to an R. N. licensure. You will join people of all ages seeking the personal enrichment of learning, wanting to try their hands at writing a poem or painting a picture. You will become one of those who realize that in today's changing world, the process of education is life-long. Further education can become your key to handling the personal and professional challenges of the future.

Will I be the only older student in my classes?

Probably not. Over ten percent of Midland's enrollment consists of students over age 25, and their numbers are increasing. Students and faculty alike are accustomed to having a varied class and feel that discussion is enriched when students with greater life experience are in the class.

For those who enjoy getting to know other adult students, a campus organization called Students of Life Experience (SOLE) has been formed. Brown-bag lunch get-togethers are held every other week, and the group sponsors speakers and various social activities. Anyone who wishes may join.

I'm wondering . . . am I ready to study again?

It can be worrisome to begin studying again, particularly when you have to devote time to work and family responsibilities as well. Midland offers help with time management, brushing up on study skills, and individualized tutoring for particular classes through the Teaching-Learning Center (TLC) located in the library. Pat Trautrimas, Director of the TLC, will answer your study questions. The TLC can help you prepare for tests or write papers too. Its services are free to all students.

Incidentally, we find that adult students usually do quite well. It can be easier to learn things when you have some experience on which to base them. Many an adult student might say, as one did, "I was scared the first week of school!" and then go on to satisfaction and enjoyment. "My experience has been rewarding, a challenge, and refreshing," said one; while another adds, "I feel very comfortable with my fellow students and instructors."

How can I afford to go to college?

Midland College is committed to the idea that no one will be denied a Midland education because of financial circumstances. Many scholarships, grants, and low-interest loans are available. Bob Walker, Director of Financial Aid (Room 211, Administration Building), creates an individual financial aid package for each student, and will help you find all the aid to which you are entitled. Talk to us about financial aid. We're eager to help.

How do I become a student at the College?

To take an Evening School or Summer School course, no admission procedure is required. Simply sign up for the course at the registrar's office (Room 209 in the Administration Building). To become a part-time or full-time student in the Day School, call or visit the admissions office (721-5480; Room 214 Administration Building). Rollie Kahnk, Director of Admissions, or one of the admissions staff will show you how easy it is to become a student and will take you through the necessary procedures. In general, if you have a high school diploma or a GED certificate, you are eligible for admission.

I'm not sure I know which courses to take. How will I decide?

One way is to visit with an admissions counselor. If you wish, our counselors can introduce you to faculty members in your areas of interest. They can explain what is covered in the various courses and aid you in deciding what to take. If you plan to enter a degree program, a faculty advisor will help you set up a schedule of classes that meets your needs and also fulfills the various college requirements.

Will courses I took at other colleges and universities count toward Midland's degree requirements?

Midland accepts credits from other accredited institutions of higher learning. Courses with substantially the same content as those taught at Midland in which you have earned a "C" grade or higher may be counted as elective credits, major field credits, or as credit toward direct degree requirements at Midland. Consult with L. P. "Pete" Mitchell, the Registrar, (Room 209, Administration Building), to find out about any particular course.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I may need child care in order to attend college. Can Midland help?

Most Midland students who are parents make their own child care arrangements. However, the College keeps a list of child care providers, and students do make cooperative child care arrangements with one another. Check with the Student Personnel Office (Room 205, Administration Building) to get the most recent information.

What if my family needs to find me in an emergency?

A copy of each student's schedule is kept at the college switchboard on the second floor of the Administration Building. If you wish, you may add information about where you will be when not in class to this schedule, to help the Student Personnel Office locate you with a message. Public telephones are located on the first floor of the Administration Building and in the Student Union.

What kind of facilities does Midland have for students living off campus? Where do I park? Where can I go between classes? Where can I eat on campus?

The Midland campus is compact, yet spacious. You may park in the large off-street parking area adjoining Clarkson street, and all of the college facilities will be within easy walking distance.

Between classes, if you want to study, the library is a good place to go. It offers a number of different seating areas with pleasant, quiet surroundings. For a cup of coffee, a snack or a friendly chat between classes, the Student Union is popular.

The Student Union is also where those who bring lunch from home usually like to go. Hot and cold sandwiches, snacks, ice cream and beverages are sold there, too. If you want something more substantial to eat, cafeteria-style meals are available in the college dining hall for a very reasonable price. Lunch there includes soup and salad bar, choice of three entrees, dessert and beverages.

I'd like some more information about Midland. How do I get it?

Call the College at 721-5480. If you live out-of-town, write us or call our toll-free number from anywhere in Nebraska, 1-800-642-8382. Stop by the campus to meet the staff, pick up materials about the College, or look over the facilities. We're looking forward to meeting you.

Director of Admissions
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Fremont, Nebraska

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